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THE

CHARACTER OF THE GENTLEMAN:

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

STUDENTS OF MIAMI UNIVERSITY,

ON THE EVENING BEFORE COMMENCEMENT DAY, IN THE MONTH OF AUGUST, 1846.

BY FRANCIS LIEBER,

PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND ECONOMY IN SOUTH CAROLINA COLLEGE; AUTHOR OF POLITICAL ETHICS; PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION IN LAW AND POLITICS; ESSAYS ON LABOUR AND PROPERTY, &c. &c.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

MIAMI UNIVERSITY, August 13, 1846.

My Dear Sir:

I have to express to you, on behalf of the young gentlemen of the University, at whose request your excellent Address of last evening was delivered, their sense of the obligation under which you have laid them, by your kind compliance with their invitation, and to request that you will add a further favour to that already conferred, by furnishing a copy for the press. It affords me great pleasure to make this communication, and I take the liberty to express the hope that you will accede to this request.

I am, dear sir, with great respect and esteem, yours, &c.

E. D. MacMASTER.

Francis Lieber, Esq., LL. D.

My Dear Sir:

It gives me much pleasure that the young gentlemen of Miami University consider the subject, on which I have written an Address to them, of sufficient importance to wish the publication of my thoughts on it. My Address is entirely at their service, and I beg you to express to them my best acknowledgments for the kindly and favourable feelings with which they view my imperfect composition.

Accept the assurance of my highest regard, and believe me,

My dear Sir, your very obedient,

FRANCIS LIEBER.

To the Rev. Dr. MacMaster, President of Miami University.

THE

CHARACTER OF THE GENTLEMAN.

Young Gentlemen:

The very word by which I have the pleasure of addressing you, will form the subject-matter of the address, which, in the spirit of great kindness you have called upon me, unknown to you as I am, to deliver on this festive day. When I was obliged to decline the honour, because uncertain whether I would be able to meet you at the appointed time, you have with equal goodness permitted me to send you in writing those remarks which I might have spoken under more favourable circumstances. I thus find much increased the difficulty of addressing those between whom and myself no personal acquaintance has yet subsisted. My words will be conveyed to you without the natural aid of the author's own utterance; and, whilst I address you under peculiar disadvantages, I have been obliged to select my subject under others equally great. My foot has never yet trodden the soil of your State; I am unacquainted with what may be peculiar to your society or characteristical of your institution, and stand in danger of leading you to the unmarked wastes of flat and unprofitable generalities. I beg you, therefore, to bear with me, should you find my subject not sufficiently appropriate for this occasion, for which I have selected the Character of the Gentleman, as a subject appearing to me useful to be discussed before young men who, in receiving a liberal education, are preparing themselves for the most important walks of practical life.

Young as you are, you must have observed, that the term gentleman, indeed, is used in common intercourse almost unmeaningly; but that it has also come to designate a character of

high attributes, and is employed on occasions apparently much differing in their nature. It is made use of as an incentive in education at home and training at school, with those who are yet sporting through the age of boyhood. Dr. Thomas Arnold, that solid scholar, wise Christian, fervent lover of liberty and great schoolmaster, pronounced it as his highest aim to make his scholars feel like Christian gentlemen; and an English writer, to express most strongly his admiration of Plato's works, says that they are pervaded by a spirit, almost, of a Christian gentleman; an officer of the army or navy may be tried for "conduct unbecoming a gentleman," a charge ruinous to his career, if the court pronounces him guilty; "on the word of a gentleman" is considered among men of character equivalent to a solemn asseveration, and the charge "he is no gentleman" as one of the most degrading that can be brought against a man of education. You would understand me at once as being desirous of conveying a grave idea, were I to say that Socrates, though condemned by vulgar and ferocious envy, died, passionless, a philosopher and a gentleman, or that Charles the First, after having long dispensed with veracity, and often stooped to unworthy practices, demeaned himself, during his trial and on the scaffold, like a gentleman.

We naturally ask, then, what is the meaning of this comprehensive term, and, is there anything substantial in the character which it designates, or is it an idol arbitrarily set up by fickle Fashion, beside morality, perhaps above religion? Has it become a caricature, however innocent at first, or ought it to be well known and attentively cultivated?

I must not detain you with the well known etymologies of the word, given among others by Gibbon, nor with its meaning in the English law. Blackstone's Commentaries, or any proper book of reference, will speedily satisfy the curious on this point. Let us rather endeavour to ascertain what is meant at present by those, who choose their words with care and knowledge, when they use the term gentleman in its highest acceptation. I believe it signifies that character which is distinguished by strict honour, self-possession, forbearance, generous as well as refined feelings and polished deportment,—a character to which all meanness, explosive irasibility and peevish fretfulness are alien; to

which, consequently, veracity, courage, both moral and physical, dignity, self-respect, a studious avoidance of offending others, and liberality are habitual and have become natural. We always connect the ideas of honour, polish, collectedness of mind and liberal disposition with the word gentleman, and feel that its antagonistic characters are—if you permit me, in the spirit of philosophical inquiry, to use words which otherwise find not easily a befitting place in a gentlemanly discourse—the clown, the coward, the liar, braggart, swaggerer, bully, ruffian and the blackguard, according to that peculiar attribute of the gentleman, the opposite to which may be prominent in the antagonistic character.

If I use here the word *polish*, I mean, indeed, that urbanity which, in most cases, is the effect of a careful education and of choice intercourse, or consists in high breeding, but which, nevertheless, may result from native qualities so strong that subsequent cultivation may become comparatively unimportant. There are native gentlemen, as there are native heroes, bards, orators or diplomatists. Whoever has read Captain Wilson's account of the Pelew Islands* will concede that the King Abba Thulle and his brothers, especially Raa Kook, were, in all their nudity and unacquaintance with white men, as delicately-feeling and complete gentlemen as can be found in any nation of long-planted civilization; and I have at this moment an old, now departed, negro slave in my mind, whom I have never seen otherwise than obliging, polite, anticipating, self-possessed, dignified and forbearing—in short, a gentleman in his humble sphere. As a matter of course, this can be by way of exception only; but the more difficult the exception, the more honourable is the instance.

The character of the gentleman produces an equality of social claims and supersedes rank, office, or title. It establishes a republic of intercourse, as we speak of the republic of letters. Nowhere appears, and indeed can appear, this fact more striking, than in the messroom of a British regiment, where the colonel and the ensign, who, under arms, stand in the relation

* Account of the Pelew Islands, composed from the Journals of Captain Henry Wilson, wrecked on those Islands in the ship Antelope in 1783, by George Keate, Esq., 4th edition, London, 1789.

of the strictest military discipline, meet on the common ground of gentlemanlike equality, and freely accord to each other all the privileges to which every member of the great commonwealth of comity is fairly entitled.

I feel induced to give you the translation of a passage which I found in a valuable French work, entitled British India in 1843, by Count Warren. The author, a Frenchman, was educated at Paris, obtained a lieutenancy in a British royal regiment in India and served there during nine years. My translation is literal, and you will remember that the original was written by a Frenchman—a consideration which will give peculiar force to some parts, and induce you to make allowance for others on the score of French vivacity. Count Warren, speaking of his colonel and the aid-de-camp of his regiment, says:

"I found in those two men a type essentially English, and, at the same time, a degree of perfection, to which it is, perhaps, not given to Frenchmen to attain. The reader must have seen that I was not disposed to view the defects of English society with too indulgent an eye; I do not compare it, for a moment, with ours, as to engaging qualities—urbanity, kindness, simplicity, and as to all the delights which can render life happy, such as grace, *bonhomie* and charming manners; but as we do not find the diamond in gold and silver mines, but in the layers of crumbled rocks and coarse sand, so do we find the most perfect type of man buried deep in the rude elements of our neighbours; the perfect English gentleman is the Phœnix of the human species. There is wanting in Frenchmen, to attain to this height, nothing but a more elevated and intense sentiment of personal dignity, a more religious respect for the divine part which the Almighty has vouchsafed to men. There are few, I might say, there is not one among us, who is a hero before his valet-de-chambre or his most intimate friend. However excellent a Frenchman may be in society, before strangers or in the presence of ladies, his very *bonhomie* causes him at once to lower himself, so soon as he is alone with the friend of his heart, the companion of his studies, the confidant or messenger of his first follies. This results, I shall be answered, from an excess of two good qualities—from our absence of affectation

and the gaiety so characteristic of the French temper; but we have also generally the defects of these two qualities—an inclination to let ourselves go without restraint, impurity of thought and conversation,* exaggeration and *harliquinade*,† which we are astonished to meet with at every moment in the gravest men and best minds. The perfect English gentleman never follows solely his impulses, and never lowers himself. He carries conscientiousness and the remembrance of his dignity into the smallest details of life. His temper never betrays him, for it is of the same character with his exterior; his house might be of glass; every one of his acts can bear the broadest light and defy criticism. From this we see that the individual whom we have delineated is not a product purely indigenous; he must undergo several transplantations, respire the air of the continent and especially of France, in order to attain to perfect maturity, and to get rid of certain qualities inherent in the native soil—disdainfulness, prejudices, etc. But if education, circumstances, and travel, have favoured this development, it is of him, above all, that we may say, he is the lord of creation."

So far our author, who is right in calling the character designated the gentleman a type peculiarly Anglican. It belongs to the English race; nor is it long since it has been developed in its present and important form. Lord Campbell, in his Lives of the Lord Chancellors of England, says that one of the earliest instances of the word gentleman being used in the modern sense, was when in 1640 the Commons, unwilling to vote supplies to Charles the First, before settling their grievances, although the King had promised to give due consideration to the latter, were told by Lord Keeper Finch, that they should freely vote the money, for "they had the word of a king, and not only so, but the word of a gentleman."‡ But so occurs a passage in Shakspeare, "Sir, the king is a noble gentleman," and Pistol calls himself, in Henry the Fifth, "as good a gentleman as the Emperor." The passage, however, in which the poet seems to use the word most strikingly in the modern sense,

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* *Grivois* in the original, which is, literally translated, smuttiness.

† *Harliquinade* is in the original; I could not translate it by buffoonery.

‡ See note to page 561, vol. II, of Lives of the Lord Chancellors.

is that in which Antonio, a merchant, is called "a true gentleman."* Yet it cannot be denied, that throughout Shakspeare's works—that surprising panorama of human life—the word gentleman is almost exclusively used either for nobleman, or a man of the higher classes with polished and graceful manners; or its meaning is in a state of transition between the knight of high and sensitive honour, and the modern gentleman; but it hardly ever designates the true modern gentleman, although the word occurs nearly five hundred times, according to the laborious concordance, for which the public owe very sincere thanks to our countrywoman, Mrs. Clarke.

You will, of course, not misunderstand the position I have advanced, that the present type of the gentleman is of modern development and Anglican origin, as if I meant that there are no true gentlemen in other countries, or that there have been none in antiquity. All I can wish to convey is, that with other races, and at other periods the character of the gentleman has not developed itself as a national type and as a readily understood and universally acknowledged aggregate of certain substantial and lofty attributes; nor is there now in any other language a word corresponding in meaning to the word gentleman, though all of Latin origin have words of the same etymology.

The ancient Dherma Sastra of the Hindoos ordain, that a man who loses a law-suit, shall not be liable to punishment, if in leaving the court he murmurs and openly rails against the judge—a law, it will be acknowledged, exclusively dictated by a spirit of gentlemanly forbearance. When Lycurgus treated Alcander, who had put out one of his eyes, with forbearance and even confidence, he proved himself a gentleman, as he did towards his nephew Charilaus, under the most tempting circumstances. When Cæsar, after the battle at Pharsalia, burnt the papers of Pompey, which might have disclosed to him the names of all his personal and most dangerous enemies, he acted as a gentleman; if indeed, he did not throw a secret glance at them, which, from the general tenour of his life, I think we have no right to suppose. Alexander began his career

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* Merchant of Venice, III, 4.

as a highbred gentleman, and could never wholly disguise that Nature had intended him for one; but, what with withering absolute power and riotous intemperance, she was robbed of her fair handiwork.

Yet we need only remember the scurrilous invectives with which even the first orators did not think it beneath them to assail their opponents in the Roman senate or the Athenian ecclesia, to be aware that, in our times, a member would be instantly declared out of order and put down, were he to make use of similar language and resort to equal personalities, even in assemblies in which, to the detriment of public tone and public service, deviations from parliamentary decorum no longer form rare exceptions. Falsehood did not disgrace with the ancients, as it does infallibly with modern free nations.

It does not appear difficult to account for the fact that the peculiar character which we call the gentleman, should be of comparatively late development, and have shown itself first fully developed with the English people. Each of the various constituents of this character required peculiar social conditions to come to maturity. The middle ages were at times—though not so often as is frequently supposed—sufficiently favourable for the development of chivalrous honour under the united influence of an active love of individual independence, and a softening reverence for the softer sex. But one of the pervading characteristics of those angry times was that of exclusive privilege, contradistinguished from a broad acknowledgment of the rights of all and a willing recognition of humanity in every one. Mediœval liberty was always a chartered one—extorted by him who had the power to extort, and grudged by him who had not the power to withhold. Modern liberty, on the contrary, is constitutional, that is, national, recognizing rights in all, covering the land, and compassing the power-holder himself. This exclusiveness and the constant feuds and appeals to the sword prevented the growth of that collected calmness, ready forbearance, and kind reciprocity, which we have acknowledged as necessary elements of the modern gentleman. Later periods, especially in the progress of manners in France, were propitious to the development of refinement and a polished deportment; but it was at the cost of morality, and took place

under a daily growing despotism, which in its very nature is adverse to mutual reliance and acknowledgment, to candour and dignity of character, however favourable it may be to stateliness of carriage. Veracity is a plant which grows in abundance on the soil of civil liberty alone. The character of the gentleman, such as we now know and cherish it, was not therefore fairly developed, before the popular institutions and a broader civil liberty in England added a more general consciousness of rights, and their acknowledgment in others, a general esteem for candour, self-respect and dignity, together with native English manliness and calmness, to the spirit of chivalry which, in some degree, was still traditional in the aristocracy, and to the courtesy of manners which perhaps had been adopted from abroad. The character of the cavalier was essentially aristocratic; that of the gentleman is rather of a popular cast, or of a civic nature, and shows in this, likewise, that it belongs to modern times. The cavalier distinguished himself by his dress—by plume, lace and cut; the gentleman shuns external distinction, and shows his refinement within the limits of plain attire. The character of the gentleman includes whatever was valuable in the cavalier and the earlier knight, but he stands above him, even with reference to that very element which constituted a chief attribute of the cavalier—to honour. Untarnished honour depends in a great measure upon truthfulness, and it is a cheering fact, that the world has become far more candid within the last two centuries. The details of the history of domestic intercourse, of traffic, of judicial transactions and bribes, of parliamentary procedures, of high politics and international affairs, bear us out in this position, however painfully we may even now far too frequently be forced to observe infractions of the sacred law of plain dealing, religious candour and gentlemanly veracity. In ascribing greater veracity to the people of free countries, in modern times, I may appear to gainsay other and distinguished writers. Montaigne actually says, that we moderns punish the charge of a lie so severely, which the ancients did not, because we lie habitually so much more, and must save appearances. But Montaigne wrote in France, at a very bad period, and we may well ask besides, whether antiquity with all its details

was vivid in his mind when he penned that passage. If the position I have advanced be wrong, I have at any rate not hastily come to it. I am convinced that there is at present more truth in the intercourse of men, although we speak and write less bluntly. Who has studied history without meeting, occasionally with acts of deception which we find it difficult to understand, because public opinion would not suffer them, and would utterly disgrace their authors at present?

We must be prepared to meet with corresponding caricatures of the many high attributes of the true gentleman, and with mimicking impersonations of vicious dispositions. The saint's counterfeit is the hypocrite; the patriot is caricatured by the demagogue; the thrifty husband by the miser; the frank companion by the gossip; the chaste by the prude, and the conscientious by the pedantic; the sincere reformer by the reckless Jacobin; and the cautious statesman or firm believer in the necessity of progressive improvement, distrusting abrupt changes, by the idolater of the past and the Chinese worshipper of the forefathers. In a similar manner we find the sensitive honour of the gentleman counterfeited in the touchy duellist; his courage by the arrant bully; his calmness of mind by supercilious or stolid indifference, or a fear of betraying the purest emotions; his refinement of feeling, by sentimentality or affectation; his polished manners by a punctilious observance of trivial forms; his ready compliance with conventional forms in order to avoid notice or giving offence to others, or his natural habit of moving in those forms which have come to be established among the accomplished, by the silly hunter after new fashions, or a censurable and enfeebling love of approbation; his liberality, by the spendthrift; his dignity and self-respect by conceit or a dogged resistance to acknowledge error or wrong; his candour by an ill-natured desire of telling unwelcome truths; his want of irritability by incapacity of enthusiasm, and his composure by egotism. But these distorted reflections from a deforming mirror do not detract from the real worth and the important attributes of the well-proportioned original; nor can it be said that this character has been set up as a purely ethical model in spite of religion. I am convinced that it was possible to conceive this

character in its fulness, only by the aid of Christianity, and believe—I say it with bowing reverence—that in him to whom we look for the type of every moral perfection, we also find the perfect type of that character which occupies our attention.

It seems then plain, that in placing before us the character of the gentleman as one of the models of excellence, we do not allow the nimble hand of *neomaniac* fashion to substitute a puny idol, decked with tinsel imitations of substantial gold, for the true and lasting patterns of virtue and religion; nor can you fail to perceive the vast practical importance of an active, ready, inward gentlemanliness, from which a gentlemanlike conduct as naturally results, as the spontaneous effect from any living, healthy organism.

In all spheres of our lives there occur many acts of so complex a nature, that, if they are submitted to a long process of reasoning, which possibly may appear the more impartial, the more heartlessly it is undertaken, they will allow of a perplexing number of arguments, for and against, of bewildering precedents on either side, and of distinctions more embarrassing than unravelling, so that in the end we see our way less clearly than at the beginning—acts, from which, nevertheless, a mind instinct with genuine gentlemanliness will shrink at once, as being of doubtful candour, dangerous to honour, of suspicious honesty, or inclining to what is illiberal or undignified. No merchant or tradesman, no advocate, statesman, teacher or minister—no citizen in whatever circle he may move—none of you in your preparatory spheres, can avoid being called upon promptly to decide in cases of this nature. Acts, somewhat tinctured with what we would call unhandsome, or slightly tainted with what may be mean, cannot always be distinctly discerned as such by the purely reasoning faculties, and all these acts are nevertheless dangerous, because they are infusions of impurity into our soul, where nothing is at rest, but every thing, good or evil, is in constant perfusing and assimilating activity—a psychological law which is subject to far fewer exceptions, if any, than the corresponding law of assimilation of matter in the animal body.

History is full of these instances; daily life surrounds us with them, and although the pure principles as well as precepts

of religion are invaluable, and of primordial importance to all ethic vitality, and for which indeed you can find no substitute, search where you may, yet a keen and instinctive sense and glowing love of honour, watchful and prompt self-respect, and habitual recoiling from what is low and vulgar and base in thought, deed or manner, form an active moral co-efficient, or, if I may say so, an additional faculty quickly to receive impressions upon which religious conscientiousness shall decide and work.

Young gentlemen, a clear and vigorous intellect is in morals as important as in any other sphere of action, but the general state of the soul, and the frame of mind are of greater importance, and no one will deny that gentlemanship, taken in the sense in which the word has been used here, contributes to a pure general frame of mind. Forgetting the primary importance of the purity of the soul, and the belief that the morality of human acts is ascertained by a minute weighing of their possible effects upon others, and not upon the actor himself, or by subtle definitions of the millions of acts which may occur in our lives, is one of the radical and besetting vices of the Jesuistical casuists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of an Escobar, Sa Busenbaum, Bauny, Swarez, and innumerable other *doctores graves*, as they were styled by their own order*—a vice which ultimately led them to rear their amazing system of stupendous turpitude.

It will be scarcely necessary here to mention the question unfortunately still at times moved, whether a man be safe if he make the law of the land the sole standard of his moral conduct. To put this question shows the utmost confusion of morals and politics, of the righteous and the legal, of the law written in our heart, and the statute printed in the law book; of the commandments of virtue, the resistance to which must remain possible, lest we should lose our moral character, and the ordinances of civil authority which must be enforced and complied with, though it be but because a penalty threatens the transgressor; of conscience and the constable; of the codes by which fellow men judge a few acts of ours here beneath, and

* Ellendorf, a Catholic priest and writer against their morality and polity, mentions three hundred.

that one code by which our Maker judges our whole soul above. But it seems to be certain, that comprehensive as this error be, a clear perception of the obligations of the gentleman is one of the safeguards against falling into it. There are millions of actions which a gentleman cannot find the heart to perform, although the law of the land would permit them, and ought to permit them, lest an intermeddling despotism should stifle all freedom of action. Political and positive laws are not intended to be a substitute for our conscience.

Whichever field, young gentlemen, you may choose for your future labours in practical life, it is necessary that you carry the standard of the gentleman with you, and that now, ere the temptations of busy life beset you, you fix it firmly in your soul by daily repeated practice.

Those of you who intend to become divines, must remember that the whole character and meaning of the minister's calling is founded upon a constant intercourse with men, whom he has to teach, to guide, to save—an intercourse depending for its usefulness upon the confidence reposed in his sincerity of faith, purity of morals, and prudence, and honourable bearing. You will have no other power to support you. The government does not build your churches. If a congregation are convinced that their pastor is a true Christian, a learned divine, and a perfect gentleman, he has the strongest hold on their confidence in him. He must not forget that the pulpit gives him a periodical and frequent opportunity of speaking to large numbers without reply. This is power, and requires, like every power, among other things, to be wielded in a gentlemanlike manner, if its possessor desires to secure himself against his own abuse of it. If, on the other hand, the divine descends into the arena of controversy, which, however undesirable, it does not always depend upon him to avoid, he can hardly inflict a severer injury upon his sacred cause, than by exhibiting to the world, and calling forth in his adversaries, bitterness of spirit, unfairness of argument, or passionate, gross and abusive language, in short the conduct "unbecoming a gentleman." The great cause of the Reformation was immeasurably injured by the undignified and even scurrilous character of many controversial writings on both sides, in a degree which makes us still

bear the sad consequences, and which greatly interfered with the diffusion of truth over Europe. Let no one persuade you that this vehemence, as that ungentlemanly bitterness and rudeness is sometimes called by way of euphemism, was necessary against violent enemies, and according to the spirit of the times. It is as bigoted as to say that so false-hearted and blood-thirsty a despot as Henry the Eighth, was necessary to break up the convents. No great and enduring cause stands in need of low or iniquitous means; and every low, vulgar or heartless word engenders two and three in reply. That which is great and true is best promoted by means high and pure.

Others of you will enter the profession of the law. They will avoid many dangers incident to this profession by a loyal adhesion to the character of the gentleman. The advocate, in our country and in England, enjoys peculiarly high privileges, that is power. Probably it is not desirable or feasible to restrain its abuse in all cases; at any rate, as matters stand, he can frequently abuse it without the probability of being restrained. It becomes, therefore, the more necessary that he restrain himself. I do not now speak of that in a lawyer's practice, which is censurable upon the broad and immutable principles of morality, and from which the profession of the advocate does no more absolve than any other calling. What a degradation of the lawyer, if, like the Japanese wife, he were incapable of doing wrong. Nor do I speak of "those too common faults," as the great lawyer, Sir Matthew Hale, said, "of mis-representing evidence, quoting precedents or books falsely, or asserting anything confidently by which ignorant juries or weak judges are too often wrought upon."* I believe these trespasses are now far rarer. Nor shall I dwell upon the fact that a gentlemanly spirit must needs be a safeguard against becoming a "leguleius quidam cautus et acutus, præco actionum, cantor formularum, auceps syllabarum."† The pettifogger and the *legicrepa*, as the low Latin had it, are the opposites to the gentleman advocate—one of the finest types of the citizen of a free country. Nor need I mention that it is incumbent upon a judge to move scrupulously within the limits of the gentleman,

* Burnet's Life of Sir Matthew Hale, p. 72.

† Cicero, in Oratore, fragm. ap. Augustin I, 3 contra Acad. c. 7.

if it be incumbent upon any one in the wide range of civilized society. I pass over all this as plainly obvious; but I must mention to you, inexperienced as you are, that lawyers not unfrequently here and in England, allow their zeal for the client or the prosecution to make them visibly swerve from the path of the gentleman. However close and searching your examination of a witness may be, you are bound by all the laws of morality, by all the principles of high-mindedness and the very meaning of the institution of the advocate itself, to behave as gentlemen toward him whom the laws of your society place for a time in an irksome situation, and make dependent upon you. Let me relate an occurrence which happened not long ago, as a warning to you. In the year 1840, a man named Courvoisier, murdered Lord Russell. His counsel received a full confession from the prisoner twenty-four hours before the trial. The barrister stated the fact to the judge, who told him "to do his best," according to custom. And what did he do, who seems first to have doubted the propriety of defending a confessed criminal? He presented one of the witnesses, a Mrs. Priolans, a woman of unblemished character, who kept a respectable boarding house, as having perjured herself, and keeping a house of the worst character; he called the police-men ruffians, a gang of blockheads, panting for rewards, though he knew that the police no longer accept of rewards, and treated Courvoisier's female servant most unwarrantably.* I abstain from giving you the name of him who was guilty of conduct so shameless; for, he is yet living and may repent. We hope he may. His conduct is so revolting, that ingenuous youth may ask, why I relate an occurrence so obviously criminal, that it stands on a par with any other criminal deviation from the path of rectitude? I do it, because this barrister is one of no common standing, and of established name, who seems to have fallen into this grievous offence from an incorrect view of the duties of a counsel, and because he could not have fallen into it, had he felt like a gentleman. If advocates were the only persons on earth who stand absolved from the obligations of truth, morality and justice, society would have placed itself under a

* I follow in this relation the papers and reviews, such as the Edinburgh, of the time.

most degrading and absurd despotism, and their whole order ought speedily to be abolished. Yet it is a fact that the institution of the advocate exists everywhere along with civil liberty, and is indispensable to it;* therefore, let them be gentlemen.

The prosecuting officer, on the other hand, must not forget that the indicted person is placed in his power, which he may abuse, seriously, scandalously and in an ungentlemanly manner, as history most amply shows; that the prisoner is yet to be tried; that the object of the trial is justice, not to oppress, worry or hunt down the prisoner, or to asperse his character so foully, that though he may be fully acquitted, his reputation may be ruined for life, and that too, perhaps, merely by insinuations. In the course of your studies you will find instances of what I say in Sir Edward Coke and in Bacon—him, who would never have been so dreadfully wrecked that he saved naught but immortal fame of intellect, had he felt like a gentleman instead of cringing before a James and fawning upon a Buckingham, being ready for their meanest and their darkest work. Bacon was void of all dignity. Earl Strafford said after his trial for high treason: "Glynne and Maynard have used me like advocates, but Palmer and Whitelock like gentlemen, and yet left out nothing that was material to be urged against me." Does not every one understand at once what he meant?

Do not believe that you will lastingly promote even your worldly interests as lawyers by any infraction of the strictest rules of a gentlemanly conduct. Every advocate of experience, I venture to say, will tell you that a fairly established reputation as gentlemen will be an efficient agent in promoting your career as lawyers.

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* I have dwelt on this subject more at length in the chapter on the Judge, Jury and Advocate in Political Ethics. The enemies of civil liberty know well the importance of the institution of the advocate for civil liberty. Archbishop Laud and Earl Strafford show, in their correspondence, the most inveterate hatred against lawyers, without whom, they confess to each other, it would be easy to establish the King's "absolute" sovereignty, their adored idol; and Duclos (page 335, vol. 76, of Collect des Mémoïres, second series,) says that the foreign ministers applauded, in the name of their masters, the regent, duke of Orleans, for having repressed *ces legistes*, (in 1718,) that is, having incarcerated three presidents of the Parliament. Laud and Strafford, however, ought not to have forgotten those lawyers, who, as Audley, successor to Sir Thomas More, urged it as a claim to promotion, "had willingly incurred all manner of infamy to serve the government."

Some of you, no doubt, will become editors of newspapers. The journal has become a prominent agent of modern civilization, and the editor holds great power in comparison with his fellow-citizens. He daily speaks to many; he can reiterate; he is supported by the weight which, however unfounded the opinion may be, is attached by the minds of almost all men to every thing printed, over that which is merely spoken; and he is sure that the contradiction of what he states will not run precisely in the same channels, through which the first assertion was conveyed. All this, and the consideration that the daily repeated tone in which a paper publishes or discusses the many occurrences of the day produces a sure effect upon the general tone of the community, ought to warn an editor that if the obligations of a gentleman are binding upon any one, they are indubitably so upon him. The evil influence which some papers in our country, very active, but very ungentleman-like, have already exercised upon our community cannot be denied. Let me in addition single out but one specific application of the general obligation, that the editor ought always to conduct his paper as a gentleman, an instance of more frequent occurrence in our country than in others—I mean the unauthorized publication of private letters, private conversations, and altogether, the exposure of strictly private affairs, before the public. I was obliged to mention this palpable infraction of a gentlemanly conduct; but it is so palpable that, being once mentioned, it is unnecessary to say one word more about it. That the universal obligation of veracity is most emphatically binding upon the editor is evident, but it does not belong exclusively to the subject of gentlemanship. The subject of veracity is as general, comprehensive, and elemental, in the moral world and all human life, as that of light is in all physical science and the life of nature.

A most important subject yet remains for our consideration,—the character of the gentleman with reference to politics or the public life of the citizen; but I have detained you already so much beyond the time during which I expected to put your patience to a test, that I am constrained to limit myself to a hasty sketch of a very few subjects only connected with that immediately in hand.

The greater the liberty is which we enjoy in any sphere of life, the more binding, necessarily, becomes the obligation of self-restraint, and consequently the more important all the rules of action which flow from our reverence for the pure character of the gentleman—an importance which is enhanced in the present period of our country, because one of its striking features, if I mistake not, is an intense and general attention to rights, without a parallel and equally intense perception of corresponding obligations. But right and obligation are twins—they are each other's complements and cannot be severed without undermining the ethical ground on which we stand—that ground on which alone civilization, justice, virtue and real progress can build enduring monuments. Right and obligation are the warp and the woof of the tissue of man's moral, and therefore likewise of man's civil life. Take out the one, and the other is in worthless confusion. We must return to this momentous principle, the first of all moral government, and, as fairness and calmness are two prominent ingredients in the character of the gentleman, it is plain that this reform must be materially promoted by a general diffusion of a sincere regard for that character. Liberty, which is nothing else than the enjoyment of unfettered action, necessarily leads to licentiousness without an increased binding power within; for liberty offers to man indeed a free choice of action, but it cannot absolve him from the duty of choosing what is right, fair, liberal, urbane and handsome.

Where there is freedom of action, no matter in what sphere or what class of men, there always have been, and must be, parties, whether they be called party, school, sect, or "faction."* These will necessarily often act against each other; but, as a matter of course, they are not allowed to dispense with any of the principles of morality. The principle that everything is permitted in politics is so shameless and ruinous for all, that I need not dwell upon it here. But there are a great many acts which, though it may not be possible to prove them wrong according to the strict laws of ethics, nevertheless appear at once as unfair, not strictly honourable, or ungentlemanlike, and

* In the conclave the cardinals used to divide into Spanish, French, etc., factions, i. e. parties; possibly they do still so.

it is of the utmost importance to the essential prosperity of a free country that these acts should not be resorted to; that in the minor or higher assemblies and in all party struggles, even the intensest, we ought never to abandon the standard of the gentleman. It is all important that parties keep in "good humour," as lord Clarendon said of the whole country. One deviation from fairness, candour, decorum and "fair play," begets another and worse in the opponent, and from the kindliest difference of opinion to the fiercest struggle of factions sword in hand, is but one unbroken gradual descent, however great the distance may be, while few things are surer to forestall or arrest this degeneracy than a common and hearty esteem of the character of the gentleman. We have in our country a noble example of calmness, truthfulness, dignity, fairness and urbanity—the constituents of the character which occupies our attention, in the father of our country; for Washington, the wise and steadfast patriot, was also the high-minded gentleman. When the dissatisfied officers of his army informed him that they would lend him their support, if he were willing to build himself a throne, he knew how to blend the dictates of his oath to the commonwealth, and of his patriotic heart, with those of a gentlemanly feeling toward the deluded and irritated. In the sense in which we take the term here, it is not the least of his honours that, through all the trying periods and scenes of his remarkable life, the historian and moralist can write him down, not only as Washington the Great, not only as Washington the Pure, but also as Washington the Gentleman.

If, in a country of varied and intense political action, in which changes and new combinations must often take place, the standard of the high-bred gentleman be abandoned, the effect is as baneful as that of a prying and falsifying secret police in despotic governments. Mr. Ranke relates, in his History of the Popes, that the utmost caution of each to every one prevailed in Rome, because no one knew how he might stand with his best friend, in a year's time. The same destruction of confidence and mutual reliance must spread over the land where freedom reigns, and a gentlemanly character does not at the same time prevail. Lord Shaftesbury, the brilliant, energetic, and reckless Alcibiades of English History, rigidly observed the

rule, during all his tergiversations, "that he never betrayed the secrets of a party he had left, or made harsh personal observations on the conduct of his old friends; not only trying to keep up a familiar private intercourse with them, but abstaining from vindictive reflections upon them in his speeches or his writings."* This observance and his Habeas Corpus Act go far with us in redeeming the character of this profligate and unprincipled statesman. If you wish to see the disastrous effects of a general destruction of confidence and mutual reliance, you must study Spanish history; for I believe that the worst effect of the Inquisition has been the total change of the Spanish national character. Even dukes became spies, and that noble nation was filled with suspicion, in the dark shades of which the character of the gentleman cannot prosper.

I must not omit mentioning, at least, the importance of a gentlemanly spirit in all international transactions with sister nations of our race—and even with tribes which follow different standards of conduct and morality. Nothing seems to me to show more irresistibly the real progress which human society has made, than the general purity of judges,† and the improvement of the whole administration of justice, with the leading nations, at least, on the one hand, and the vastly improved morals of modern international intercourse, holding diplomatic fraud and international trickery, bullying, and pettifogging, as no less unwise than immoral. History, and that of our own times, especially, teaches us that nowhere is the vapouring braggadocio more out of place, and the true gentleman more in his proper sphere, than in conducting international affairs. Fairness on the one hand, and collected self-respect on the other, will frequently make matters easy, where swaggering taunt, or reckless conceit and insulting folly, may lead to the serious misunderstanding of entire nations, and a sanguinary end. The firm and

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* Lord Campbell's Lives of the Chancellors. Vol. iii. p. 290.

† I have lived for long periods in Italy, Germany, France, England and the United States, and never heard, in the four last mentioned countries, of a judge suspected of bribery. Yet, only a short period has elapsed since satire and comedy teemed with the standing subjects of bribed judges, criminal advocates, and irksome wedlock, and Lord Campbell, in the work cited in the preceding note, says, "England, during the Stuart reigns, was cursed by a succession of ruffians in ermine, who, for the sake of court-favour, violated the principles of law, the precepts of religion and the dictates of humanity."

dignified carriage of our Senate, and the absence of petty passion, or vain-gloriousness in the British Parliament, have brought the Oregon Question to a fair and satisfactory end—an affair which, but a short time ago, was believed by many to be involved in difficulties which the sword alone was able to cut short. Even genuine personal urbanity in those to whom international affairs are entrusted is very frequently of the last importance for a happy ultimate good understanding between the mightiest nations.

We may express a similar opinion with reference to war. Nothing mitigates so much its hardships, and few things, depending upon individuals, aid more in preparing a welcome peace, than a gentlemanly spirit in the commanders, officers, and, indeed, in all the combatants toward their enemies, whenever an opportunity offers itself. I might give you many striking proofs, but I observe that my clepsydra is nearly run out. Let me merely add, as a fact worthy of notice, that political assassination, especially in times of war, was not looked upon in antiquity as inadmissible ; that Sir Thomas More mentions the assassination of the hostile captain, as a wise measure resorted to by his Utopians; that the ambassadors of the British Parliament, and later, the Commonwealth-men in exile, were picked off by assassination ; while Charles Fox, during the war with the French, arrested the man who offered to assassinate Napoleon, informed the French government of the fact, and sent the man out of the country ;* and Admiral Lord H. Vincent, the stern enemy of the French, directed his Secretary to write the following answer to a similar offer made by a French emigrant : "Lord H. Vincent has not words to express the detestation in which he holds an assassin."† Fox and Vincent acted like Christians and gentlemen.

I have mentioned two cheering characteristics of our period, showing an essential progress in our race. I ought to add a third, namely, the more gentlemanly spirit which pervades modern penal laws. I am well aware that the whole system of punition has greatly improved, because men have made penology a subject of serious reflection, and the utter fallacy of many

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* Pell's Life of Charles James Fox,—p. 592.

† Tucker, Memoirs of Admiral the Earl H. Vincent,—vol. i. p. 203.

principles, in which our forefathers seriously believed, has at length been exposed. But it is at the same time impossible to study the history of penal law without clearly perceiving that punishments were formerly dictated by a vindictive ferocity—an ungentlemanly spirit of oppression. All the accumulated atrocities heaped upon the criminal, and not unfrequently upon his innocent kin, merely because he was what now would gently be called "in the opposition," make us almost hear the enraged punisher vulgarly utter; "Now I have you, and you shall see how I'll manage you." Archbishop Laud, essentially not a gentleman, but a vindictive persecutor of every one who dared to differ from his coarse views of State and Church, presided in the Star-Chamber, and animated its members when Lord Keeper Coventry pronounced the following sentence on Dr. Alexander Leighton, a Scottish divine, for slandering Prelacy: "that the defendant should be imprisoned in the Fleet during life—should be fined ten thousand pounds—and, after being degraded from holy orders by the high commissioners, should be set in the pillory in Westminster—there be whipped—after being whipped, again be set in the pillory—have one of his ears cut off—have his nose slit—be branded in the face with a double S. S., for a Sower of Sedition—afterwards be set in the pillory in Cheapside, and there be whipped, and after being whipped, again be set in the pillory and have his other ear cut off." The whole Council agreed. There was no recommendation to pardon or mitigation. The sentence was inflicted. Could a gentleman have proposed, or voted for so brutal an accumulation of pain, insult, mutilation and ruin, no matter what the fundamental errors prevailing in penal law then were? Nor have I selected this, from other sentences, for its peculiar cruelty. Every student of history knows that they were common at the time, against all who offended authority, even unknowingly. Compare the spirit which could overwhelm a victim with such brutality, and all the branding, pillory and whipping still existing in many countries, with the spirit of calmness, kindness, yet seriousness and dignity which pervades such a punitory scheme as the Pennsylvania eremitic penitentiary system, which for the very reason that it is gentlemanly, is the most impressive and penetrating, therefore the most forbidding of all.

Let me barely allude to the duties of the gentleman in those countries in which slavery still exists. Plato says,* genuine humanity and real probity are brought to the test, by the behaviour of a man to slaves, whom he may wrong with impunity. He speaks like a gentleman. Although his golden rule applies to all whom we may offend or grieve with impunity, and the fair and noble use of any power we may possess, is one of the truest tests of the gentleman, yet it is natural that Plato should have made the treatment of the slave the peculiar test, because slavery gives the greatest power. Cicero says we should use slaves no otherwise than we do our day-labourers.†

The subject which I have chosen covers so extensive a ground, that it is difficult either to break off or to select the most important points. Give me leave, then, young gentlemen, to refer to but one more subject of practical importance, before I shall address to you my concluding remarks. It is the subject of deriding others, so natural to untutored minds, yet so inconsistent with a truly gentlemanly spirit, because so painful, and generally so undeservedly painful, to those who are the objects of our deriding smiles. A very few reflections will show you that they are not agreeable to that genuine good nature, and still less conformable to that refinement of feeling which characterize the gentleman. Perhaps it will appear that he who laughs at others, shows that he deserves our pity more than the person laughed at. There is not a subject in the whole province of psychology which offers greater difficulties, possibly none that offers difficulties so great as that of laughing and the ridiculous. You will find that we feel tempted to smile, sometimes, even when our soul is filled with horror. We ought then to take care not to be betrayed into an act so little understood, when done at the cost of another, who may feel pained or humbled by our inadvertance. We may further say that every thing novel, which does not at once strike us as grand, sublime, or awful, inclines us first of all to smile. The advanced state of my address prevents me from giving you instances. You can easily, however, provide them for your-

* De Legibus, lib. vi. edi. Bispont, viii. 203.
† De Officiis, xiii.

selves. But if the fact be as I have stated, you will see at once that the smile, caused by everything novel, betrays as often our own ignorance as any better cause of our risibility. You ought, moreover, always to remember that every human action, perceptible by the senses, and which strikes us at all, causes us to laugh, if we are unacquainted with its antecedents, or if we see it out of connexion, unless an experienced mind and vivid imagination quickly supply the antecedents, or a well trained mind abstains from laughing at others or at striking things, as a general rule. Here, again, the ridiculous is not inherent in the phenomenon, but it is owing to him that laughs. To see, but not to hear, persons singing, is to all untutored minds ridiculous. Suddenly to find a man vehemently speaking and gesticulating strikes us as ridiculous, while, had we been present from the beginning, he might thrill our very souls by those same tones and gestures. Even marks of the tenderest affection fare no better in this respect, and what is more common than the laughing of the uneducated at the accent of those, who, nevertheless, may have used great diligence and study to make themselves well understood in an idiom, all the difficulties of which they are unable to overcome, because they have not learned it on their father's knees, or from their mother's blessing lips, and most willingly would speak to you without any of those deviations at which you may smile, did it depend upon them. We frequently laugh at acts of our neighbors. Did we know all the antecedents, their whole education, their checkered lives, we should find nothing to laugh at, and at times, these very acts might make us weep indeed. It is a rule, therefore, of much practical importance for the gentleman never to laugh at others unless their pretension deserves it; but if he, in turn, be laughed at, he will remember that it is a common failing of which he has not always remained free, that placid good nature is a signal attribute of the gentleman, and that, if he have given real cause for laughter, there is no better means to deprive the laughter at us of all its sting, than freely to join in it.

I have spoken of laughing at others only, not of laughing in general. He that can never heartily laugh can hardly have a heart at all, or must be of a heavy mind. A sound laugh at

the proper time is the happy music of a frank and confiding soul. It is the natural song which the Creator gave to man, and to man alone, in lieu of all the lovely tones which he profusely granted to the warblers of the wood.

But we must return to more serious subjects before I conclude. They shall be treated in two more remarks, the last with which I shall detain you. They will be very brief; but, young gentlemen, I invite your whole attention to them. Ponder them; for they are of momentous importance for your whole lives—important even to your country.

"Habit is the best magistrate," was a wise dictum of Lord Bacon's. Merely mental acknowledgment of moral truth forsakes you, when it becomes most important to apply it—in moments of great temptation, of irritation, of passion. If repeated and constant acting upon that truth has not produced a habit or grown into a virtue, it may be sufficiently strong to produce repentance after the offence, but not to guide when yet it can be avoided. Apply yourselves, then, sedulously at once to act habitually and constantly by the highest standard of the gentleman—to permeate your soul by a truly gentlemanly spirit. No better opportunity to practise this moral rule is given you than your present relation to your teachers. Let a truly gentlemanly tone subsist between you. You will not only make your life pleasant and sow the seeds of happy remembrance, but it will give new force and new meaning to the very instruction, for the reception of which you have come here, and it will best prepare you for establishing that relation which is one of the happiest, most fruitful and blessed that can subsist between man and man—I mean, friendship between the teacher and the taught—a relation of which we find so beautiful an example in Socrates and his followers, and so holy a model in Christ and his disciples—a relation which lends new strength to the mind to seize what is offered, and which, in a great measure, overcomes the difficulty of communion between soul and soul. For all language is but approximation to the subject to be expressed, and affection is the readiest, truest and richest interpreter of the ever-imperfect human word. Believe me, my young friends, however extensive the knowledge of your teacher, skillful his language, or ardent his zeal, and

intense your attention may be, you will hear and learn far more, if affection toward him animates that attention, and you will integrate with your very soul that which, without friendship between you and him, remains matter of purely intellectual activity, liable to be superseded by successive layers of knowledge.

If thus you make the character of the gentleman more and more your own, you will prepare yourselves in a manner, important among others, for the high and weighty trusts which await all of you as citizens of a commonwealth in which we enjoy a rare degree of personal liberty. I have shown you how closely connected the Character of the Gentleman is with a high standard of true civil liberty, but it is necessary to direct your mind, in addition, to the fact that there are difficulties in the way of attaining to this high end, peculiar to young Americans while yet it may be one of the problems, the solution of which is assigned to us by history, to develope the peculiar character of the high bred republican gentleman as a pervading national type, as it has been that of the monarchical gentleman. It is difficult for princes to imbibe the true spirit of the gentleman, because their position and education naturally lead to the growth of selfishness; and so there are, on the other hand, obstacles in the way of carefully cultivating this character, peculiar to a country in which so great an amount of liberty is enjoyed by every individual as in ours. Suffrage is almost universal, and so far as the vote goes, all have equal weight; you see some persons rise to distinction, without any high claim to morality, religion, or gentlemanliness, and the powerholders, whether they be monarchs or the people, a few or many, ever listen to flattery. It is inherent in power; and it is a common belief, though I am firmly convinced of the contrary, that large masses are not flattered by gentlemanliness. Even if it were so, we would have no right to sacrifice so important a moral standard. Are we allowed to do any evil which we may yet be fully persuaded would promote our worldly interest? But happily it is not so. Even the least educated have an instinctive regard for the high bred gentleman, however they may contemn various counterfeits of the gentleman, especially the dandy; and the acknowledgment on the part of a whole com-

munity that a man *is* a gentleman, gives him a hold on them most important in all matters of action. Adhere to it. If you see others rise above you by practices which you contemn, you must remember that it is one of the very attributes of the gentleman, to stand alone when occasion requires it, in dignity and self-possession, without conceit, but conscious that he has acted right, honorably, gentlemanly.* Distrust every one who would persuade you to promote your interest by descending. The elementary law of all progress, be it religious, mental, political or industrial is, that those who have some talent or skill or knowledge in advance of others, should draw those after them, and make them rise. This is the truly democratic law of united advancement, in which every one leads in whatever he can lead. All else is suspicious aristocracy—the aristocracy of a few, or the aristocracy of the low, if aristocracy is marked, as I think it is, by undue privilege, which is unbefitting to every one and all, be they the few, or the many. Scan history and you will find that throughout the annals of civilization this uniform law prevails, that a favoured mind perceives a truth, gives utterance to it, is first disbelieved, derided or attacked, perhaps called upon to seal the truth with his death, but the truth is not lost; it is diffused into the minds of the very detracters, it diffuses itself, and in so doing is modified; it collects votaries sufficient to form a minority, and at length the minority swells into a majority, which ultimately establishes the principle in practice; so that the whole process has consisted in men being drawn up to the truth. It requires patience and gentlemanly forbearance, but is not God the most patient of all? You cannot point out a single vast movement of mankind towards an essential improvement, which does not serve as an illustration of the law I have just stated to you.

And now, gentlemen, at the very moment of writing these last words, I received the speech of Sir Robert Peel on the 30th of June, in which he explains the reasons of his resignation and his defeat in parliament, after having happily passed the

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* The importance of the character of the gentleman in politics, especially in the legislative assembly and in the representative in general, has been more fully discussed by me in the chapters on the Duties of the representative in the second volume of Political Ethics.

free corn trade bill, and as the reader is referred in some works to a diagram at the end of the volume, so shall I conclude by pointing to that manly speech as a practical illustration of much that I have said on the conduct of the gentleman in politics. Outvoted in parliament, discarded by the party with whom he came into office, and seeing his successor in power, influence and honors before him, he still speaks of his whole portion, his antagonists and his former friends now turned into bitter enemies, with calmness, dignity and cheerful liberality, allowing that in a constitutional country, the loss of power ought to be the natural consequence of a change of opinion upon a vital party question, while he yet rejoices at having thus come to different and better views upon so essential a point as that of the daily bread of the toiling many, and frankly ascribes the chief merit of this most momentous progress to a gentleman* who belongs to a sphere of politics totally different from that in which he himself has been accustomed to move. It is a gentlemanly speech, leaving a corresponding impression in his own country and throughout ours, conciliating, and commanding respect as the effect of a conduct truly gentlemanly always will be where civilization dwells among men.

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*Mr. R. Cobden, member of Parliament, and leader of the Anti-Corn Law League, has deserved well of mankind. There is but one omission in Sir Robert Peel's speech, with which we might feel tempted to find fault. No one, I believe, feels greater admiration for Mr. Cobden's wise and energetic course—which, indeed, procured him the offer of a place in the British Cabinet—than myself; but even his labours, and those of the League, would have remained unavailing for a long time yet, it would seem, had not Divine Wisdom resolved to send at this precise juncture the pressing potato rot, and thus aided one of the greatest advancements of mankind, to come to maturity. The historian must mention, together with Cobden and the League, the potato rot.

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